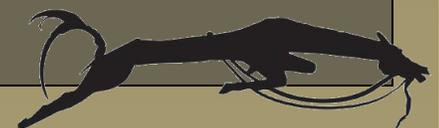


3. Recommendations for Developing Interpretive Signs



According to Amanda Adams with LOKI Interpretive Group, interpretive signs serve a variety of functions for communities, such as:

1. Interpretive signs illuminate the power of place. Clear educational messages and content inform the public of each site's historic significance.
2. Interpretive panels do more than provide just dates and facts. They also inspire a feeling of stewardship in site visitors, strengthening awareness of cultural and natural resources.
3. Thoughtful and well designed signage programs demonstrate community pride in local heritage.
4. Interpretive signage is self-sufficient: it provides a high-quality interpretive experience without the requirements of staff or facilities to maintain.
5. They are a consistent message available to many visitors at one time, can be viewed at the visitors' convenience, and are available 24 hours a day.
6. Interpretive signage enhances visitor perceptions of a site, city, or region. By drawing attention to an area's unique history and identity, tourists better appreciate the story of a new place. Captivating interpretive signs and exhibits can become destinations in their own right.



They are not ideal in every situation however. They are vulnerable to damage by weather, wildlife, and vandalism. They are also non-personal and may draw attention to a fragile resource that could be damaged by visitors.

Before researching, drafting the text, or designing a sign, the need for the interpretive sign must be determined. Answer the following questions:

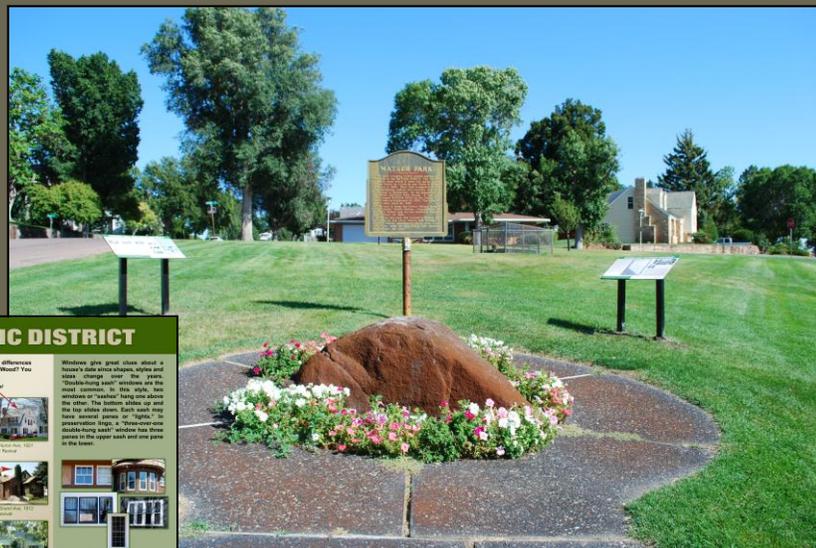
- Is there something that needs explaining?
- Will something be missed without interpretation?
- Is a sign the appropriate form of interpretation?
- Will the sign help prevent damage to the site?
- Will enough visitors see the sign to make it cost effective?
- Who is the target audience of the sign?
- Will the signs damage the site?

There are three different types of interpretive signs. Ask yourself if you want your sign to inform, educate, or entertain the audience. What are your objectives?

- What do you want the audience to know and learn?
- What do you want the audience to do?
- How do you want the audience to feel?

Example: Pierre Hill Historic District sign located in Mater Park in Pierre, SD.

- Learn: Different styles of architecture are identified by different features.
- Do: Tour the Pierre Hill Residential Historic District to see the different architectural styles represented.
- Feel: All architectural styles, whether they are considered high style or not, play an important role in history and the development of neighborhoods.



PIERRE HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

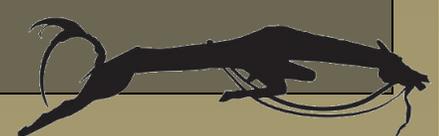
Stroll through the Pierre Hill Historic District for a lesson in 19th-1920s architecture. Notice the differences between houses – are the windows tall and narrow or short and wide? Is the siding brick? Stone? Board? You can guess the construction date by knowing a bit about architectural styles.

| Architectural Style | Dates | Features |
|---------------------|-----------------|--|
| Queen Anne | c. 1880 to 1910 | Pointing hip gables, decorative brackets, widely pitched roofs, wrap-around porches. |
| Artisan | c. 1880 to 1900 | Brick fire, two gabled roof with wide eaves, and simple horizontal stripes of brick siding. |
| Craftsman & Prairie | c. 1900 to 1920 | Small one or one-and-a-half-story houses, the pitched roof including the porch and entrance is typical of this style. |
| Tudor Revival | c. 1910 to 1920 | Large white and red English cottages with steep roofs, half-timbering, large chimneys and small porches. |
| Colonial Revival | c. 1910 to 1920 | Colonial Revival style has captured our hearts, with its simple lines, decorative columns and pedimented porches. |
| Manor | c. 1910 to 1920 | Colonial and neoclassical styles, the grandest and grandest styles, with large porches, lots of windows and high ceilings. |
| Traditional | c. 1910 to 1920 | Traditional style is a mix of styles, with a focus on symmetry and balance. |

Windows give great clues about a house's date since shapes, sizes and how they change over the years. Double-hung windows have two windows or "sashes" hanging side above the other. The bottom sashes are fixed and the top sashes slide down. Each sash may have several panes or "lights." The neoclassical style, a "manor-style" double-hung sash window has three panes in the upper sash and one pane in the lower.

Decorative iron top rail, decorative cast-iron base, decorative columns, decorative pediment, decorative brackets, decorative brackets, decorative brackets, decorative brackets.

DM&E



Interpretive signs differ from historical markers. Historical markers are more informative rather than interpretive. For more information about historical markers, please see the historical marker program at <http://history.sd.gov/Preservation/OtherServices/HistoricalMarkers.aspx>

Some additional areas to consider are below.

Text:

- Must be an appropriate reading level--usually between a 7th and 9th grade level.
- Use short sentences and paragraphs. Keep text blocks short.
- Avoid using jargon or technical terms.
- Use upper and lower case text, not just uppercase.
- Should be vivid language using active verbs.
- Do not overload the reader with information.

Design and layout:

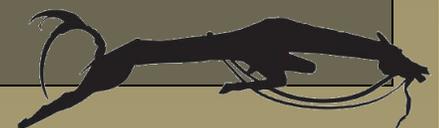
- Do not crowd text and graphics.
- Avoid distractions such as busy backgrounds, illegible type, too dark or bright colors, etc.
- Use colors and images that attract audience.
- Limit colors to dominate, subordinate, and accent colors.
- Use type styles and sizes that are easy to read. Do not use more than three different types.
- Serif fonts can be easier to read, especially in longer text blocks.
- Mount at appropriate height and angle for comfortable viewing. Keep in mind those with disabilities.

Location:

- Answer the following questions to determine the best location for a sign.

- What is the relationship between the sign and the subject it is interpreting?
- What is the potential for vandalism?
- How accessible is the sign, particularly for those with disabilities?
- Where is the location that gets the most traffic?
- Who will maintain the sign?
- Would the property owner be willing to place the sign at the desired location?

When analyzing the sign, ask yourself these questions throughout the development process:



- Do the titles, subtitles, and artwork support the main points of the text?
- Is the text arranged in small sections of 40 to 75 words? Shorter text blocks are easier to follow and do not lose the readers interest.
- Is there good contrast between the text and the background? Is there little distraction/clutter in the background?
- Is there a natural movement from the main title and art to the main text? Is there a clear hierarchy of importance?
- Is there blank space? There should be enough to allow the eyes to rest but not too much that there is “dead space”.
- Is the layout clean and simple? Simplicity is usually better for interpretive signs.
- Does the sign compliment the environment in which it is located?
- Does the sign achieve its intended interpretive objective for the intended audience?

Interpretive signs are a great medium that can reach a wide audience with minimal effort.

